DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 375 950 PS 022 707

AUTHOR Cormier, Gladys M.
TITLE Increasing Knowledge and Assessment of Foster Care Children through In-Service Training for Elementary School Educators.
PUB DATE 94
NOTE 78p.; Ed.D. Practicum Report, Nova University.
PUB TYPE Dissertations/Theses - Practicum Papers (043)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC04 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Behavior Problems; *Educational Strategies; Elementary Education; *Elementary School Teachers; *Foster Children; High Risk Students; *Inservice Teacher Education; Intervention; Needs Assessment; Program Descriptions; Program Development; Referral; Special Education; *Teacher Attitudes; *Teaching Methods

ABSTRACT

This practicum sought to provide elementary school teachers with the skills and knowledge needed to teach students residing in foster care. The three specific goals of the practicum were: (1) to have all 30 of the teacher participants use teaching strategies appropriate to the education of foster care children; (2) to have at least 25 of the 30 teachers use at least 3 intervention strategies before referring a foster child for behavior problems; and (3) to decrease the number of foster care children referred for special education assessment. Inservice teacher training sessions were developed and conducted to achieve these goals. Teacher appraisal worksheets, behavior referrals, and suspension charts were used during the implementation phase to document the teachers' growth. A post-intervention assessment was completed by teachers to document their understanding of the needs of foster children. Analysis of the assessment data, classroom observations, and school records indicated that all three goals of the practicum were met. (Two appendixes contain strategies for healthy preschool and school-age child development and suggestions on how teachers can help children cope with stress. Contains 41 references.) (MDM)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

8741

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)
X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

ED 375 950

Increasing Knowledge and Assessment of Foster Care Children Through In-Service Training for Elementary School Educators

by

Gladys M. Cormier

Cluster XXXIX

A Practicum II Report to the Ed.D. Program
in Early and Middle Childhood in
Partial Fulfillment
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

NOVA UNIVERSITY

1994

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Gladys M. Cormier

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

PS 022707

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

PRACTICUM APPROVAL SHEET

This practicum took place as described.

verifier: Patricia Kinnan

Patricia F. Kinnan, Ed.D.

Principal
Title

647 West Gardena Blvd.

Gardena, California 90247
Address

04-16-94
Date

This practicum report was submitted by Gladys M. Cormier under the direction of the adviser listed below. It was submitted to the Ed.D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova University.

Approved:

5-31-94
Date of Final Approval of Report

Paul B. Borthwick, Jr.

Paul B. Borthwick, Jr., Ph.D.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The writer would like to gratefully acknowledge Dr. William Anderson, for through his positive attitude he helped this writer to succeed.

Dr. Barry W. Birnbaum who provided substantially more than routine academic stimulation and support necessary for this writer's course of study.

Dr. Paul B. Borthwick who was right on time.

Dr. Stanley Olivier who was always there.

Hattie Toy, Danielle Cormier, Alvin Cormier, Anna Edmonds, Jacklyn Harris, Donna Ledoux, Bryan Smith, Lonel Bell and Sheena. A family that every student needs for Love and Support.

And to God, the source of life itself.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

TITLE PAGE . . . . . .

PRACTICUM APPROVAL SHEET . . . . . .

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS i

TABLE OF CONTENTS ii

LIST OF TABLES iii

Chapter

I INTRODUCTION 1

Description of Work Setting and Community . . . 1
Writer's Work Setting and Role 3

II STUDY OF THE PROBLEM 6

Problem Description 6
Problem Documentation 7
Causation Analysis 12
Relationship of the Problem of the Literature 14

III ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS 19

Goals and Expectations 19
Measurement of Objectives 19
Mechanism for Recording Unexpected Events . . 20

IV SOLUTION STRATEGY

Discussions and Evaluations of Possible Solutions 22
Descriptions and Justification for Solution Selected 35
Calendar Plan 37

REFERENCES 58

Appendices

A STRATEGIES FOR HEALTHY PRESCHOOL AND SCHOOL AGE DEVELOPMENT POULSEN (1985) 61

B HOW TEACHERS CAN HELP CHILDREN COPE WITH STRESS 67

Page

Table

1. Teacher Appraisal Worksheet 7

2. Behavior Referrals and Suspension Chart 8

ABSTRACT

Implementation of an In-Service Program to increase knowledge and assessment of foster care children through in-service training for Elementary School Educators. Gardena, California, 1994: Practicum II Report, Nova University, Ed.D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood. Descriptors: Teacher involvement/Teacher Role/Teacher Participation/ Teacher Workshops/Teacher Community Relationship/Teaching Methods/ Learning Strategies/Adaptive Behavior/Communication Skills.

The goal of this practicum was to provide elementary educators with the skills or background needed to teach children in foster care placement through in-service training. Three broad objectives designed to achieve this goal were: (1) thirty of the 30 participants would utilize teaching strategies appropriate to the education of foster care children as determined by classroom observation; (2) twenty-five of the 30 educators would utilize at least three intervention strategies before referring a foster child for behavior problems as documented on an intervention checklist; (3) it was also expected that school records, over any two month period would show a decrease of five in the number of foster care children referred for special education assessment.

Teacher appraisal worksheets, behavior referrals and suspension charts were used during the implementation phase to document educators growth. Journals were kept by the educators for easy recall. A 30 minute assessment was completed by each educator at the end of the in-service training sessions to show their increase or decrease in the understanding of the needs of foster care children. Because comprehensive ventures, such as this practicum, may have produced unforeseen occurrences, the writer kept a log of each in-service training session. The log contained activities that were successful as well as unsuccessful.

The results of this practicum were positive. Analysis of the data revealed that all of the 30 educators involved showed an increase in the understanding of the special needs of foster care children. The positive outcome suggests that a solution of this type is warranted in the continuing search by educators for effective strategies in addressing the unique needs of children in foster care placement.

Permission Statement

As a student in the Ed.D. Program and Middle Childhood, I do (x) do not ( ) give permission to Nova University to distribute copies of this practicum report on request to interested individuals. It is my understanding that Nova University will not charge for this dissemination except to cover the costs of microfiching, handling, and mailing of the materials.

04/16/94
(date)

Gladys Cormier
(signature)

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Description of the Work Setting and Community

The work setting for the writer was an urban elementary school (grades K-6) situated in a low income (less than $1,000 monthly income for families of five) government-sponsored area. The school is one of six elementary schools serving predominantly minority children who were administratively placed or voluntarily enrolled. This particular school is one of the smaller elementary schools located in this metropolitan area. The largest elementary school in this district has approximately 2,300 children, while the smallest has approximately 700 children. Most of the elementary schools in this district were changed in the last three years from elementary (grades K-6), junior high (grades 7-9), and high school (grades 10-12), to elementary (grades K-5), middle school (grades 6-8), and high school (grades 9-12).

This writer elected to use an elementary school which still consists of a sixth grade class until June 1995, at which this time the sixth grade will be dropped because of an already increased population. The school serves various exceptionalities such as: gifted, specific learning disabilities, emotionally handicapped, speech and language impaired. The school also has had two gifted units for the last seven years, but the new projection is for pre-gifted units. There is one specific learning disabilities program.

Within the last two years the socioeconomic level has changed from basically white middle-to-upper-middle class children to basically middle to lower class minority children (Black, Hispanic, and Asian). Until 1991, three fourths of the children lived in homes owned by their parents. Many of these families were considered as a "whole family" which consisted of a mother, father, two children and sometimes grandparents or at least one grandparent. Since 1991 these families have changed in structure and now consist of a foster child, a child who is in placement through no fault of the childs' own. According to Terry Kirk (1990), Department of Children Services Administrator, Special Placement Section for this city, placement of children in out-of-home placement has reached an all time high. Approximately 50,000 abused, neglected, and abandoned children were placed in elementary schools in this city and are in need of special help. Placement of children in foster homes, group homes, and shelters equal 14,421; homes of parents 16,842; homes of relatives 15,645; legal guardians 1,725, psychiatric hospitals 136, MacLaren Children Center 183, and the number of Department of Children Services foster homes is 3,800. All of these children need proper educational placement. The public school system has been given the responsibility to teach these children. Thus the ultimate responsibility is given to the school teacher.

The participants in this practicum totaled 30 eductors, including 28 elementary school teachers, an elementary school principal, and a school psychologist. The educators were from a variety of ethnic groups (primarily European-American and African-American) and had several years of experience in their respective professions. The range of professional experience was five through 18 years for the elementary school teachers, while the elementary school principal had 11 years of experience and the school psychologist had five years of experience.

Even though the educators had a vast background of experiences, they all agreed that they had had no education, preparation, training or experience to adequately prepare themselves to cope with or to teach children who were in foster care placement. All of the educators expressed major concern regarding the many problems related to providing education to the elementary school level children who were in foster care placement.

Writer's Work Setting and Role

The writer is a registered nurse with 21 years of nursing experience, including critical care nursing of the infant/newborn, to care of the elderly. The writer's specialty is care of the critically ill patient of all age levels. The writer has had seven years of experience as a hospital nursing director. The writer has earned a bachelor of arts degree and a masters degree in Public Administration. The writer is also a certified Health

Service Instructor for the American Red Cross and holds a Ryan Health Nurse's Certificate which entitles the holder to teach school nursing or be employed as a school nurse. The writer has done the latter for the past 11 years. As a school nurse, the writer is assigned to maintain the health needs of the students and staff at four elementary schools and to counsel and educate the staff with regards to the "special child," one who has been placed in and out of foster care.

The writer is a member of a special program that began in 1986 as a special project that initially focused on boys, ages six to 12, and then was later expanded to include girls ages six to 12. All children in this program were identified as seriously emotionally disturbed and required specialized placement. Because of this special training program, the writer qualified as a specialist foster parent in the residence state. The writer has been trained to identify the needs of children in placement. The writer has seven years of foster care experience and has been a specialized foster parent for the past seven years. The major role of the writer is that of a school nurse, whose duties include being in charge of all emergency care for accidents and illnesses for both students and staff, counseling and teaching students and staff on individual and group basis regarding all health issues. The writer is in charge of mandated screening for specific health problems: vision, dental and hearing, inspecting for contagious and

communicable diseases, identifying and referring for specific problems and special education needs, reporting child abuse, consulting and referring children, staff, parents and community members regarding health and current health problems in schools: (a) substance abuse, (b) teenage pregnancy, (c) suicide prevention, and gang involvement.

CHAPTER II

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Problem Description

Elementary school educators did not have the skills or background to teach children in foster care placement. The mission of the school is to raise the academic level of all children. To work effectively with the child in foster placement, the educator must have an understanding of the problems which impede the child's academic success. Because these educators did not have the skills or background, they were becoming anxious and frustrated when attempting to educate the child in foster placement. These educators were concerned because the teaching strategies and techniques that they had previously been using were no longer successful. The problem had not been solved because the issues involved in teaching the child in foster care placement had not been addressed in this school district. The foster care issue was ignored or perceived as not being a major problem.

In the last few years, many programs were implemented that centered around problem children. These children were identified as "at-risk" children and programs were implemented to deal with these children on different levels. They were often identified as children who were "at-risk" to fail in school, to fail as a contributing citizen or to fail completely in life. It must be noted that these children were placed in special programs. A few educators were selected to teach these children, and teaching experience

was the criteria, not the educators' education or experience in teaching children with special needs. Many programs focused on the child, never on the educator. Educators were at a loss as to where to go for help. They often made and continue to make inappropriate referrals, usually to special education classes.

The problem was that educators did not have the skills or background to teach children in foster care placement.

Problem Documentation

During informal interview sessions with each educator participating in this practicum, the writer posed a series of questions regarding their work experience with children in foster placement. The most pertinent questions gleaned from these sessions were:

- How much training in the area of teaching foster children have you had?
- What has been your professional exposure to the child in foster placement?
- Do you feel that you are able to cope with and to teach the child living in foster placement?

The data that follows Table 1, gives a breakdown of the responses the writer received during the interview sessions. (See Table 1). Of the 28 educators interviewed during these sessions, none had been trained in the teaching of foster children. Twenty-seven of the 28 educators had no professional exposure to the child in foster placement; however, one educator admitted having a little exposure;

having attended only one seminar. Seven out of the 28 educators referred all of the foster children in their classes to be assessed for special education placement. Twenty-seven out of the 28 educators indicated on the worksheet that they were not able to teach or to cope with children in foster placement.

One educator had the ability to cope with and to teach children in foster care while the remaining educators felt that they did not have this ability.

After interviewing the educators, the writer examined school records and noted the number of children in foster care who were referred by each educator for special education assessment/placement during the 1990-1991 school year. The numbers are shown in the last column of Table 1 (See Table 1).

The data shows that 27 of the 28 educators referred these children for special education assessment. Let it be noted that the educator who reported to having somewhat of an ability to cope with and to teach children in foster placement made eight referrals. This data indicated the educator's growing anxieties and frustration when attempting to teach these children.

Over a 2-week period of time, the writer spent 40 minutes each day observing five classes in which six or more foster children were present. During this time, the writer noted that there were times when these foster children refused to work or caused classroom disruptions. When these

disruptions occurred, the educator immediately sent the foster children to the office for "time-out" or suspension. When these foster children refused to work, the educator simply ignored them and worked with the rest of the class.

At the end of the 2-week period, the writer interviewed the educators. When the educators were asked why the foster children had been so quickly dismissed from class or suspended, while other children were given a "second chance", the educators' responded that they could not be bothered with these children. One educator made the comment that they were "fools" and that she was not going to "waste" her time.

The educators were also asked why those foster children who refused to work were virtually ignored while other children who were not working were told to get on task. The responses were similar in nature; however, one educator summed up the feelings of the group of educators interviewed when she said, "They aren't disturbing the class, and I don't want to cause a scene, so I just leave those children alone."

The records of 28 randomly selected foster children that the writer observed during classroom visitations/observations were examined. In examination of the records, the writer focused on the number of behavior referrals and the number of days each foster care child was suspended from school during a two-month period. Table 2, shows the results of the writer's findings (See Table 2):

Table 1. Teacher Appraisal Worksheet

	Training in the education of foster children		Professional Exposure		Ability to cope with and to teach children in foster care			Number of foster children in class	Number of foster children referred
Educators	None	Some	None	Little	Y	Somewhat	N		
1	X			X	X			10	8
2	X		X				X	7	7
3	X		X				X	9	6
4	X		X				X	5	5
5	X		X				X	7	4
6	X		X				X	10	8
7	X		X				X	6	6
8	X		X				X	5	4
9	X		X				X	8	6
10	X		X				X	7	5
11	X		X				X	6	4
12	X		X				X	9	7
13	X		X				X	4	4
14	X		X				X	3	3
15	X		X				X	8	7
16	X		X				X	6	5
17	X		X				X	4	3
18	X		X				X	3	1
19	X		X				X	8	7
20	X		X				X	6	2
21	X		X				X	4	4
22	X		X				X	7	6
23	X		X				X	8	8
24	X		X				X	8	5
25	X		X				X	2	0
26	X		X				X	9	7
27	X		X				X	6	4
28	X		X				X	7	5

Table 2. Behavior Referrals and Suspension Chart

1 9 9 1

Number of Behavior Referral	Days Suspended from School
17	15
22	16
16	13
20	15
20	10
8	10
15	11
12	8
10	10
11	15
9	18
16	9
15	8
18	8
20	9
21	10
15	10
17	10
14	11
12	10

The above chart was used only as an instrument to find out what mechanisms these educators used to solve or to cope with problems that they encountered from the child in placement on a continuous basis.

What is indicated by the high number of referrals and suspensions is that the educators generally do not know what to do with these foster care children. Educators were frustrated, and as mentioned earlier, they did not want foster children in their classes.

Causative Analysis

The writer views the following as causes of the problem:

The 30 educators were not given training that is necessary to meet the needs of the children in foster placement because school districts had often failed to provide a framework in which elementary school education professionals could become aware of, understand and fulfill some of the unmet needs of children who were in foster care placement. Given this lack of framework, elementary school education professionals were often not afforded specialized training through such vehicles as in-services, meetings, and conferences which might better prepare educators to teach and cope with children who were in foster care placement.

Educators rarely had the coping strategies needed to teach the children in foster placement. Twenty-seven of the 30 educators reported their frustration at being unable to obtain the specialized care and direction that they needed to help them teach the foster child. These 27 educators stated that they needed to be taught coping strategies that would enable them to cope with the problems encountered when attempting to teach the child in foster placement. It is

assumed that elementary school educators could cope more effectively and acquire educational skills if they were provided with supportive services. In these capacities as providers of foster care services, both the Department of Human Services and Family and Child Services of Washington, D.C. (District of Columbia) are responsible for providing or producing such supportive services as psychotherapy, family therapy, according to each childs' needs.

Educators' attitudes toward foster children appeared to be biased. Comments made to the writer about children in foster placement over a 2-year period were: "Foster children are antisocial," "All foster children lie, steal and will kill," "Foster care children cannot learn because they have brain damage from their prenatal exposure to drugs," "All foster children come from the most dysfunctional families in our society--parents who abuse drugs especially crack cocaine; families that are extremely transient and move from treatments to welfare hotels; households where physical and sexual abuse are a part of daily life; families that have been unable to use preventive services and have failed at basic childbearing."

Because these educators have expressed these preconceived ideas, they stated that they felt that having these foster care children in their classroom was a waste of their time, because these foster children could not be taught, and they were unable to learn.

Relationship of the Problem to the Literature

In 1990, approximately 30,000 abused, neglected, and abandoned children were served by the Department of Children's Services (Kirk, 1990). These children who, in many instances, were suffering from the trauma of their previous situation (mental, emotional, social and/or medical problems), were placed in schools where educators, who were unfamiliar with their personal histories, were expected to teach them by using the same strategies that they would use for children not having these special needs. School districts are being inundated with children in foster care placement, and educators lack the skills and coping strategies required to meet the needs of these children. With that lack of knowledge and understanding, elementary school level professionals generally use ineffective strategies and techniques to teach and cope with children in foster care placement.

Elementary school level professionals are not aware of the many unmet needs of children who are in foster care placement, and consequently fail to employ the appropriate teaching strategies and techniques when attempting to educate these children (Shinn, M. R., Ramsey, E., Walker, H. M., Streber, S., and O'Neill, R. E., 1987). The literature revealed that the applicable school districts have not provided a framework in which elementary school educational professionals can be specifically trained to become aware of and to understand the numerous problems which may impede the

foster child from having a successful experience in school (Gil and Bogart, 1982). The provision of education for foster care children is extremely difficult, frustrating, and time-consuming for the elementary school level professional. Educators generally do not possess the knowledge or understanding to educate children in foster care placement. (Self et al., 1991).

Lee et al. (1990) reported that elementary schools educators frequently ignore and/or minimize the problems of children in foster placement. Educators often isolate these children away from the regular classroom setting. Further examination of the literature revealed that school districts have neglected to address the problem of teaching educators how to teach the child in foster placement (Kauffman Lloyd, Landrum & Wong, 1988). During the 1980's, the phrases "at-risk" emerged from the argot of actuaries and epidemiologists and entered the vernacular of educators. Indeed, it has recently become a popular expression in public media discussions of economics, sociological, psychological, and educational phenomena. Children labeled at-risk in educational settings are assumed to be prone to school failure. For example, in the Phi Delta Kappa study of children at-risk (Frymier and Gansveder, 1989), children were said to be at-risk "if they are likely to fail--to have a considerably higher-than-average chance of failure, at least without special accommodation for their disabilities." Many children on the margin of exceptionality (e.g. those

who perform very poorly academically or behave unacceptably in school) are also considered at-risk for failure and perhaps for identification as disabled.

Children in foster care have also been identified as those who are at-risk of dropping out of school. While national statistics are lacking on the dropout rate of foster children as a group, other social indices underscore the educational needs of this group (Lee, 1987). Being at-risk for failure might be defined in terms of events or conditions in the child's life outside the classroom or, alternatively, the child's behavior in the classroom. Educators frequently do not have access to, or prefer not to have information regarding these events or conditions of childs' life. Speece and Cooper (1990) state that risk could be defined as a function of a child's classroom behavior--what the child does or does not do in the classroom that is associated with school failure. Clearly, adverse conditions in students' lives outside the classroom can place them at-risk. However, the present study was concerned only with classroom behavior as a risk factor affecting teacher judgements. Despite the frequency with which the concept of risk appears in everyday discussions and in the literature of education, there is little understanding of what constitutes unacceptable risk of specific outcome (e.g., school failure, dropping out, social rejection) or of the factors that heighten or lower risk status (i.e., specific environmental conditions and behavior

characteristics). In particular, little is known about how educators judge children to be at-risk in the context of their expectations and demands for classroom conduct, although the link between disordered behavior and risk of school failure has been noted (Cuban, 1989). Johnson and Cole (1992) state that at-risk children are the least understood by a system that historically categorizes and labels difficult children-children who may not be able to conform to educational expectations and norms with consistency. At this time of crises, the educational system continues to ponder these questions: What are the educational needs of at-risk children? Are educators adequately prepared to deal with these specialized needs? What specific behaviors will these foster care children manifest in the classroom? What educational strategies can be effectively utilized in working with at-risk foster children and their families? Educating the child in foster placement is not solely a problem to be addressed by special education programs. Because of both prenatal and postnatal risk factors, this growing population of children have special needs that traditionally have not been addressed in schools. The schools, much like the child's home, is a caregiving environment.

When educating the child in foster placement, should teachers be forced to deal with and be aware of multiculturalism, a term that appears frequently in education literature during recent years? Many teachers use

the term "multiculturalism," however, only to refer to isolated classroom units. Often these formal lessons center on activities such as cooking ethnic foods, examining native American artifacts at Thanksgiving or discussing African-American achievement during Black History month. Certainly, these lessons have merit; however, since they are often isolated and discontinuous, are they "pseudomulticultural" activities? Although an abundance of theoretical and research information on multicultural education exists, many teachers find themselves at a loss when seeking practical strategies for implementing an authentic multicultural curriculum (Wilson, 1989).

CHAPTER III

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

Goals and Expectations

The goal of this practicum was to provide elementary educators with the skills or background needed to teach children in foster care placement.

- Thirty of the 30 participants will utilize teaching strategies appropriate to the education of foster care children as determined by classroom observation.
- A minimum of 25 out of 30 educators will utilize at least three intervention strategies before referring a foster care child for behavior problems as documented on an intervention checklist.
- It is also expected that school records, over a two month period will show a decrease of five in the number of foster care children referred for special education assessment.

Measurement of Objectives

1. The 30 educators were observed in their classroom setting for 40 minutes each on individual basis over a 30 day period. During this observation it was expected that each educator would utilize at least five teaching strategies from the intervention checklist appropriate to the education of foster care students (See Appendix A).
2. The 30 educators were in group settings where they assessed one child from their class to determine whether the child should be referred for special

education assessment. The educators used an intervention strategy checklist when making their assessment.

3. Educators were made aware of special needs of children in foster care. To show an increase in the understanding of these special needs, a 30-minute assessment was completed by each educator at the end of these in-service training sessions. Hopefully, implementation would show the improved attitude of educators toward foster care children. If the results of the evaluation instrument indicated a reduced level of referrals of foster care children in any two month period by five and classroom educators develop greater confidence in teaching foster care children, then the writer felt confident that all of the objectives would have been met.

Mechanism for Recording Unexpected Events

Because comprehensive ventures, such as this practicum, may have produced unforeseen occurrences, the writer planned accordingly. In order to accommodate these unforeseen occurrences, the writer maintained a log of each in-service training session. The log contained activities that were successful as well as unsuccessful. This log will be reviewed with other evaluative instruments in order to enhance the writer's presentation techniques in future courses.

The writer met weekly with the educators to discuss and monitor implementation progress. When curriculum problems occurred during implementation, the writer worked with educator(s) to solve the problem(s) and offered assistance.

CHAPTER IV

SOLUTION STRATEGY

Discussion and Evaluation of Possible Solutions

The problem in this practicum was that elementary school educators did not have the skills or background necessary to teach children in foster care placement.

There were several solutions presented in the literature that addressed the ways in which elementary school education professionals could become more knowledgeable about the needs of children who are in foster placement and through this training hopefully become knowledgeable in meeting the needs of foster care children within educational settings.

Cuban (1989) reported that the role of the school in remediating the problems could partly be solved by providing continuity for these children by creating relatively stable and supportive environments. Instead of children being referred to special classes, these children were kept in the same classroom and given tasks that they would succeed in. Other children were put in groups of five and the same tasks were repeated. Educators gave continuous support by giving verbal praises frequently. Children were encouraged to do their best and were not only praised for completing the task but also praised for beginning the task. The results were positive. Children within one year period grew one grade level academic classwork.

Fujii (1988), Birch and Elliott (1987) reported that at-risk children require a Cooperative Teaching Model. This

model proved to be effective, for it allowed school personnel (administrator, teacher, nurse, psychologist) and family members to work together to assist the child in placement to better realize their social potential. Fuller (1982) stated that teachers generally used ineffective strategies and techniques to teach and cope with the children in foster placement. These strategies such as referral to special education programs, removal to other classrooms, and suspension or expulsion from school do not alleviate the problem but often magnify it.

Johnson and Cole (1992) stated that making referrals to special education programs was not a solution to coping with or to teaching the child in foster placement, for being placed in these classes tended to lower the child's self-esteem and self-worth. They indicated that educational professionals must recognize the needs of individual foster care children, and when designing a curriculum, they should include programs that would foster the full developmental potential of each child. These programs should be designed especially to address the issue of children as a whole--program in which these foster children can achieve success and gain self-esteem.

A district recently reported that the Ten Schools Program was designed to hire educators to better staff "hard-to-staff" schools, which were located in hard core areas, had large percentages of at-risk children, and had children whose reading, math, and English skills were below

20% on the nationwide achievement scale. The educators in these schools were provided in-services to better understand and to cope with the many problems facing educators as they attempt to teach the at-risk child. This 5-year program was unsuccessful in the first 5-years. Student grades in math, English, and reading remained the same; therefore, a sixth year was added.

This same School District in 1991 also reported that the Infant and Toddler Program was designed to better help teachers understand the problems of infants and toddlers who were prenatally exposed to illegal drugs or chemicals. These infants and toddlers often develop into at-risk children, many of whom are placed into foster care. The educators in this program were provided with in-services that focused on problems which these children encountered and which may have long term effects on the child. The program is still in progress at this time.

Stufft (1989) reported that the role of the school in remediating the problems encountered by foster care children and those of educational professionals can partly be solved by providing continuity for these children by means of creating and sustaining relatively stable and supportive environments. Lee, Luppino and Plionis (1990) state that youths in foster care are at-risk of dropping out of school. Foster children's education has frequently been neglected or interrupted before, during and after they enter the foster care system. Their basic skills in reading and math are far

behind their grade placement level, and many are in need of special education placement; therefore, it is important that the educator is well trained to address the needs of these children. Children in foster care should be routinely tested so that they can receive timely assistance by trained professionals. The fact that public schools often fail to meet the needs of children is well established (Hann and Danzberger, 1987; Monaco, 1987). But rather than focusing on new instructional strategies, it may be just as important to make children "feel good" about themselves and learning. This suggestion does not discount the need for stronger academic programs. This data suggest, however, that those involved with at-risk children feel a great need for balancing those programs to meet childrens' psychosocial and cognitive needs. Knowledge on how to improve schools for at-risk children is available, and each principal must apply this information to meet the educational needs of his or her children.

Sizemore (1985) states that schools cannot succeed without effective leadership. Edmonds (1983) identified seven components of successful schools:

1. Strong administration leadership.
2. A sense of mission.
3. Clear instructional focus.
4. High expectations of children and staff.
5. Regular use of student achievement data for remediation.

6. Safe, orderly climate.

7. Parent/community involvement.

Morgan (1989) states educators must believe their students can achieve and therefore must work toward that end. How can educators who feel inadequate when teaching foster children expect their students to succeed when they are failing? Many educators who teach children in foster placement fail to become adequately prepared to teach these children; therefore, they are failing to provide the child with his educational rights. Public Law 94-142 guarantees that "a handicapped child has the right to receive a free and appropriate public education in the least restrictive setting possible." This law means that schools may face civil suits when they fail to respond to the special needs of these foster children.

Bondy et al. (1990) suggest that every educator need physical training in order to understand, cope and to teach the child in foster placement, for one must understand that these foster children have "special needs" (i.e., emotional as well as supportive). Many children lack the basic skills necessary to learn in a structural setting, as in public or in private schools and must be taught the technique of learning. Bondy et al., further indicate that these educators as well as students in foster care have may adjustments to make. Adjustments that are by no means easy. Upon removal from the home, the foster child needs to go through some type of mental health services for children.

This process is a necessary step to help children get in touch with their feelings. If the foster child is fortunate enough to be afforded this help, phases of the adjustment processes can be addressed. The first phase of the adjustment process is the child's past histories to help the child mourn the loss of their previous environment and personal relationships. In the middle phase the child relates placement to the resolution of a crisis. In this stage the child expresses sadness, anger and ambivalence. The child begins to form new, less conflicted attachments. The final phase of the adjustment process focuses on the childs' feelings of abandonment and rejection that these children have come to expect. A child in foster care often controls feelings about past losses by acting out to bring about a separation before being rejected. The final stage is usually where the school fits in. The educators sees the acting out as a form of behavior problem--an all too familiar problem that is not to be tolerated in the school setting. Educators fail to understand that this is a necessary process for children in placement, children who have been taken out of familiar surroundings and placed in unfamiliar surroundings. If educators have not been trained to handle these behaviors, they tend to misunderstand this phase of adjustment and refuse to allow the child to interrupt their classroom structure. Children in foster care need to be able to express or share their feelings. This sharing must take place before the child can go on with

the daily task of learning. Educators must be able to understand this process and be willing to help this child before learning can take place.

Just as educational professionals are taught how to teach academics, they must also be taught how to teach the foster child, for this is their tool for success. Brophy and Good (1986) note that the more effective educator, in an effort to provide an efficient learning environment, demonstrates management skills in a variety of ways including good preparation, use of rules, and lesson plans. Brophy and Good further note that in comparison with resource teachers, learning disabilities teachers in self-contained classrooms emitted significantly higher frequencies of three behaviors: (a) negative regard; (b) acknowledge inattention/disruption; and (c) desists/rebukes/warns/threatens/pushes inattention and/or disruption. These three behaviors, when viewed as teachers' efforts to maintain order and dissuade inappropriate student behavior, constitute in part a much larger set of skills typically termed classroom management skills. This view simply means that special teachers are needed to teach foster care children not necessarily a special education teacher. What is needed is a teacher who has been trained to be able to identify special needs of children in placement. This is a teacher who knows, through special training, the avenues to take to help not only the child with special needs but also to help children with normal

needs. Crain and Iwanicki (1986) found that significantly higher levels of burnout occurred in special education teachers in self-contained classrooms than in resource classrooms. Nowacek, McKinney, and Hallahan (1990) imply that "teacher training in special education should place a greater emphasis in the area of teaching classroom management skills." It is noted that teachers are special and teachers who teach the children in foster placement must not only be a special person but must have special skills. Educators of foster placement children must know when to refer and when not to refer. This process is learned not inherited. It is by no means a natural process. Schools are responsible for giving children the necessary tools to function in life. Therefore, schools must give the educator the necessary tools to pass on to the children. In-service classes prepare the educator for the joys of everyday teaching. Kirk (1990) suggests teacher in-service training as a necessary tools for the elementary school educator who is expected to teach foster care children.

Kaumaya (1990) reported that teacher in-service training with special emphasis on working with foster care children and sensitivity issues of the foster care child should be addressed in every school setting. Murray (1990) proposed that workshops/meetings with administrative staff and school employees is the necessary tool to ensure success for both the educator and the child in placement. Marte (1990) states that in-service classes for teachers in the

elementary school setting should focus on loss and abandonment issues of the foster child, and why abused children may have learning problems. Wilson (1989) states that educators need assistance in evaluating their views about cultural diversity and strategies that may be used in the classroom setting. Multicultural ideas are "caught" rather than "taught"; that is multicultural attitudes are developed through every day experiences rather than formal lessons. Multicultural ideas and activities, therefore, should be thoroughly integrated throughout all activities every day--not only in fragmented units (Hendricks, 1990). There are six issues listed that are designed to help educators evaluate their multicultural views and practices: (1) building multicultural programs, (2) showing appreciation of differences, (3) avoiding stereotypes, (4) acknowledging differences in children, (5) discovering the diversity within the classroom, and (6) avoiding pseudomulticulturalism. Educators need to consider each issue carefully and examine their own classroom for pseudomulticultural practices. The commentary includes strategies to help educators take an authentic multicultural approach. The author further states that these strategies were based on research, personal experience and logic.

Lay-Dopyera and Dopyera (1987) state that two basic complementary concepts should guide multicultural classrooms: (1) all people are similar in that they have the same basic needs such as water, food shelter, respect and

love and (2) different groups fulfill some of these needs in different ways (different types of homes, diets, etc). Similarities as well as differences, therefore, should be employed in the classroom. Lay-Dopyera and Dopyera (1987) recommend the following components for multicultural classrooms:

- Modeling by educators. If educators show that they value persons of different characteristics and backgrounds, children will sense and emulate this attitude. Educators should model acceptance of people who look, dress or speak differently.
- Curricular inclusion of multicultural heritage. The curriculum should include religious belief, music, arts and literature representing many cultures. The educator should be sensitive to the fact that not all children celebrate Christmas. Some children may celebrate Kwanzaa, Hanukkah or other holidays.
- Multicultural literature. Educators should use literature that featured children of differing racial characteristics, ethnic backgrounds and home circumstances. Literature that promotes stereotypes should not be used. During storytelling or similar activities, educators should use names representative of different cultures. Avoid the "token" approach where only one person who is not a majority group member is pictured on illustrations.
- Multilinguistic experiences. Children should learn

different ways that represent the same thing. By interpreting both colloquial and non-English expressions into the curriculum, educators can help children realize the value and fun of knowing different ways to talk. Ask children to name all the ways they know how to greet someone (Hi, yo, howdy, hey, what's up?). Then list the greetings and discuss possible reactions to unfamiliar expressions. Discussion of differences in the terminology used to refer to parents is also a good beginning activity (e.g., mama, mother, M'dear, ma).

- Resource persons from different cultures. Educators should involve people of many different characteristics and backgrounds in classrooms activities. Representatives of various cultural groups within the classroom and the community, such as local merchants, can be invited to the classroom to share African jewelry, Oriental rugs or other cultural goods. Parents may be encouraged to share a family recipe or other family traditions. An authentic multicultural approach is based on appreciation of differences in others. Modeling by educators is therefore critical. Educators do much more than help children develop basic skills; they unconsciously teach children many things, including their attitude about people who are different from them. One salient difference found, is a wide variety in speech patterns and dialects. Educators

should pay close attention to how they respond (both verbally and nonverbally) to children who speak differently. Younger children may be unaware that they speak or behave in a different way incongruent with the large society. Minority children may inadvertently be discouraged from classroom participation because of teachers' negative reactions to their attempts, For example, if a child says, "Dere go the sto-man" the educator should avoid interrupting the child to provide the standard English version (i.e., "you mean, there goes a man who works in a store?"). Instead the educator should first show appreciation for the child's contribution, then model the standard English version of the sentence or work with the child individually (depending on the child's age and the situation). Hispanic, Native American and African-American children have been exposed to negative imagery and a sense of invisibility in school materials (Spencer and Markstorm-Adams, 1990). Educators must make a conscious effort to ensure that all children see positive role models depicted in books, videos, and other instructional materials. Children's self-esteem can be adversely affected by negative messages given on a daily basis. When educators do not show appreciation for children's language and other cultural differences, children may conclude that their culture is inferior.

These feelings of inferiority are not easily overcome and are definitely not alleviated by isolated pseudomulticultural units. Educators find that helping children develop behaviors are appropriate for survival in the general society which fosters unique cultural behaviors and attitudes is a complex difficult task. Multicultural educators seek to develop an awareness of cultural practices so that the child's behavior is not misinterpreted. Rather than assuming that a child who does not maintain eye contact is sneaky or has poor self-esteem, the educator may discuss why using eye contact at school is necessary. In the authentic multicultural classroom, educators demonstrate an appreciation for different viewpoints. In a social studies class, for example, children might be asked to describe the westward movement from the viewpoints of both American pioneers and Native Americans or when discussing the Civil War viewpoints of Blacks and Whites from both the North and South should be considered.

Although most of educators realize that tremendous variations exist within each ethnic groups, pervasive societal stereotypes may negatively influence teacher-child interaction. This statement is also true of the educator who educates the foster child (Spencer and Markstrom-Adams, 1990). Educators must realize that each child possesses different strengths, and that all

people have weaknesses especially the child in placement/the foster child. The school brings together children of diverse cultures and backgrounds and teachers have the tremendous task of teaching them (Rogoss and Morelli, 1989). Educators of foster care children the world over have the same basic needs. The ways in which their needs are met, however, are determined in large measure by cultural patterns. The basic needs of foster care children are the same as the basic needs of children with multicultural heritage.

Description and Justification for Solution Selected

The solution selected for this problem was the planning and implementation of in-service classes that would increase the knowledge and assessment of educators of foster care children. This in-service program was developed to address specific issues in regards to the needs of the educators who were in charge of teaching children in foster care placement.

Some issues addressed were:

- Problem that educators have had when teaching foster children.
- Coping strategies for educators of elementary school children who are in foster care.
- Emotional needs of foster care children.
- Increased self-esteem needs in the foster care children.
- Health needs of the foster care children.

- Sensitivity issues of the foster care children.
- Shelters for foster care children.
- Behavior problems of foster care children.
- When and how to refer foster care children when all else fails in your classroom.
- Loss or abandonment issues of foster care children.
- Psychological needs of foster care children.
- Abused and neglected foster care children syndrome.
- The school's role in dealing with foster care children.
- The school's legal responsibility when dealing with foster care children.
- Problems that foster children sometimes have, i.e. fire starters, sexually acting out behaviors and fighting.
- The foster parents' role.

Thirty-two in-service training services were conducted. All of the above areas were discussed. In order to successfully teach children in foster placement, educators must understand that these children have special needs that must be addressed before learning can be expected to take place.

It was apparent from information collected in Chapter Two that these educators did not respect children in foster care placement. Therefore, the writer felt that in-servicing was the necessary tool to use in order to address this important issue.

Prior to implementation, the writer submitted the outline to the principal.

The 30 participants were given a schedule of meeting dates and an agenda covering the topics of discussion for each meeting. The writer also obtained the permission of selected authors whose work was used during the workshops.

The following steps were taken before and after each scheduled in-service training session. The writer:

a. Prepared handouts for scheduled workshops.

b. Distributed handouts and workshops forms.

c. Collected questions that the participants wished to write for the next class discussion.

d. Discussed any unanswered questions.

The writer was available to the participants at the end of each session to respond to questions and listen to questions and concerns that were not aired during the in-service training session.

Calendar Plan

There was an eight-month calendar plan, with each weekly in-service training session lasting 45 to 60 minutes.

Month 1

Week 1

Week one consisted of an introductory session. Information was shared about the in-service. Example: What is expected from the educators as students, and what can these educators expect to learn? Each educator was asked to keep a journal for easy memory recall. The writer's background was also shared.

Week 2

The teacher appraisal worksheet was distributed to the educators by the writer and the results were discussed.

Week 3

This week was used as a question and answer session. Any questions in regards to problems other educators have encountered while teaching foster care children were discussed. Example: How do foster care children learn? How do I (the educator) teach this child?

Week 4

This in-service training session was used to discuss the "at-risk child." What puts children "at-risk"? A definition and example of children who are "at-risk" were discussed by the writer.

Month 2

Week 1

The writer introduced and discussed the origin of the foster care system and why foster homes are important to foster care children, their parents, and society.

Week 2

In an informal setting the writer gave background information in regards to the foster child and defined the term "foster child"--a child who has been removed from home (through no fault of the childs' own) and placed in a foster home, group home, and/or shelter care. The writer defined abandonment, neglect and abuse (physical and verbal).

Week 3

This in-service training session focused on sensitivity issues of the foster care child.

1. "Will everyone know that I am a foster child?"
2. "Does everyone know that I do not live with my parents, and why I don't live with them?"
3. "Why am I a foster child? What did I do to get taken from my parents?

Week 4

This in-service training session focused on emotional needs of foster care children. The definition of emotional needs was defined and discussed.

Month 3

Week 1

This in-service training session focused on teaching strategies for children in foster placement. Examples: Routines, rules and regulations. How certain routines, rules, and regulations can and may affect the foster care child were discussed by the writer.

Week 2

This in-service training session addressed the characteristics of foster care children. Characteristics that are common with foster care children were discussed, and the educators compared these characteristics to children not in foster care placement.

Week 3

This in-service training session was used to address

the issues of coping strategies for educators of foster care children. Example: Where should the educator go for help when all else fails with the foster care child? Alternatives, such as using time out (a set time away from the classroom, usually 15 minutes) to benefit the foster child and the educator were discussed. How and when to refer a foster child for special help such as resource specialist program, special education class and for health needs were discussed.

Week 4

This in-service training session was used to tie in coping and teaching strategies in regards to the child in foster placement. When stress is relieved in the classroom, the educator can teach, and learning can take place. Do you view these children as regular children? To address this issue the group role played by using the model "Circle of Friends" (Appendix A). Educators took the place of the child in this skit.

Month 4

Week 1

During this session, the educators were encouraged by the writer to discuss their concerns about teaching foster care children. A major concern was how could the educators get these children to listen? How to request that an individual educational plan be made for the foster care child was taught by the writer.

Week 2

The writer presented strategies for healthy preschool and school age development, as defined by Poulsen (1986) (Appendix A).

The writer provided "rituals" of daily living by doing a skit about things that can go wrong in a day. Example: Upon arising from sleep, you find that it is 8:00 a.m. You are to be at work at 8:00 a.m. How could this be? Then you find out that you set the clock for 6:00 p.m. rather than 6:00 a.m. Then after several changes of clothing, you are ready for work, or so you think. You drop a book locking the car door, only to find that you locked your keys inside the car. In the life of a foster care child, daily living is days gone wrong.

Week 3

This in-service training session focused on how educators can increase self-esteem of children in foster placement. The children's self-esteem was enhanced through encouragement, caring, focused attention, and warm personal rewards given by the educators. The writer acted as the facilitator.

Week 4

This in-service training session focused on getting to know yourself and accepting one another. This was done through role playing by the educators. Fifteen of the 30 educators put themselves in the role of the foster child. When these 15 foster care children entered a preschool

class, the 15 educators talked with the children about strengths and problems that each child might have in making friends and using material.

Month 5

Week 1

In this informal setting the writer introduced the basic assumptions that are used when working with foster care children. Some are: "All children in placement are gang involved." It is impossible to facilitate home/school partnership in an essential part of the curriculum, these children are different from their peers, prenatal drug exposure can cause a continuum of impairments from severe handicapping condition to risk factors; however, there is no "typical profile."

Week 2

Problems that confront foster care children (e.g., parental drug abuse, emotional dysfunction, and many foster care placements, emotional and behavior disturbance academic under achievement and social inadequacies) were discussed by the writer.

Week 3

The writer discussed ways that the educator can contact the caretaker and get positive feedback. Example: The use of the public mail system and telephone contact. This in-service training session was also used to discuss the roles of different people in the life of the foster care child. For example, the foster parent, the educator, the clergyman,

the school police, the crossing guard and even other school children, all can be positive or negative influences for the foster child.

Week 4

Resources that can be accessed to remediate problems of foster care child within the elementary school setting were discussed. Example: The referral system and how to access it was addressed. This in-service training session was used to introduce and discuss public laws that pertain to the public school and the foster care child (Legal issues).

Month 6

Week 1

During this in-service training session the educators reviewed literature by authors who have addressed the problems associated with children in foster placement. After review of this literature, a discussion took place where the educators were able to transfer what they had read in the literature to their particular experience in the classroom sitting.

Week 2

This in-service training session was used to present and discuss problems confronting the teachers of elementary school foster care children. Teaching strategies and techniques suggested for remediation of academic and social problems confronting these children were discussed. Normal learning development, learning behavior of "at-risk" children and the teaching strategies used were discussed. A

mode for "at-risk" children was also discussed by the writer with feedback from the participants.

Week 3

This week was used as a question and answer period. Participants were asked questions pertaining to children in placement. During this session, the participants differentiated between what is fact and fallacy in regard to the children in foster placement.

Week 4

This in-service training session focused on behavior modification for the foster care child. The educator must acknowledge the foster care student's feelings and encourage verbal mediation. The educator must help children learn that they are not alone in having uncomfortable feelings. Give them permission to feel scared, lonely, or angry (as when a peer squashes their sandpie). Help them decenter -- become able to see how others also feel upset in their play or rights are interfered with. Give these children words to express their negative feelings so that they will not have to be aggressive or disorganized when stressed. "I" statements help a child communicate personal upset, and strong wishes rather than accusing, hurting, or threatening others.

Month 7

Week 1

A special guest speaker lectured on foster care

children as children "at-risk." These children are considered by society as at-risk for failing in life. The writer was responsible for the scheduling of this speaker.

Week 2

The writer was responsible for getting a foster parent as a speaker. This foster parent addressed problems and issues that are encountered when enrolling the foster care child in public schools and the possible problems that they encounter from school personnel (e.g., attitudes when the foster parent does not know the academic history, the family history, or the health history of the foster care child).

Week 3

The topics discussed were the "at-risk" foster child and problems and issues that are encountered when enrolling foster care children in public schools.

Week 4

The writer showed a video tape of a child in foster placement. This tape was made by the writer. The video tape allowed the educators to know that foster children are sometimes children that we know and love. The writer was responsible for collecting all material and for giving the handout that explains the story of, "Mary Alice," a child in foster placement.

After viewing the film, "Mary Alice," a question and answer session was conducted by the writer in regard to this film. Did the educators feel that this was a real story?

How could this film be used by the educators in a classroom setting which involves foster care children?

Month 8

Week 1

The writer discussed the home/school partnership. The home is recognized as an essential part of the curriculum. "Early intervention programs are essential in producing long term positive results only when parents/caregivers are professional, sensitive, and flexible. (Charles and Matheson, 1991). This in-service training session was used to discuss the issues of loss and abandonment issues of the foster child.

Health needs of children in placement were discussed by the writer. Some of these needs are referrals for dental care, hygiene, and vision care. Preventative medicine was discussed by the writer.

The school nurse is responsible for reporting possible health problems. The school nurse's role as a reporting agent was defined by the writer who is also a school nurse.

The writer introduced possible problems that should be referred by the classroom educator (suspect abuse-physical/mental and emotional). Neglect is a form of abuse. Unkempt children are viewed by the law as abused children.

"Healthy children learn better" is the school nurse's motto; therefore, it was stressed that health issues and health-related issues should be referred to the school nurse.

Week 2

During this in-service training session, the writer discussed ways that the educator can help the child in placement feel safe and secure. The educator must give support, tender loving care, and understanding because these children do have special needs that must be addressed before learning can take place.

The writer distributed a handout "How Teachers Can Help Students Cope with Stress." This handout lists ways to help both teachers, students, and parents. This handout is a collection by several authors from Levine 1989 to Lloyd, Kauffman, Landrum & Rogoss 1993 (Appendix B).

Risk factors in drug exposed children were discussed. This article was prepared by Poulsen, 1985.

Week 3

A third guest speaker addressed the group. This guest was a professional who was a foster care child.

A short questionnaire was distributed. One question was asked and discussed. "Do you feel that these in-service training sessions have better prepared you to teach the child in foster care?" The writer was responsible for making sure that all questions were answered before the next topic was presented for discussion.

Week 4

An overview of this in-service was discussed by the writer. A summary was then given by the writer. The writer was responsible for collecting and distributing all

material. Personal journal information was shared by the educators during this in-service training session.

After implementation of the eight months of in-services, the writer was responsible for assisting these educators in the evaluation of foster care children on a continuing basis.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Results

The major problem in this writer's elementary school was that the educators did not have the skills or background necessary to teach children in foster care placement, as demonstrated by the teacher appraisal worksheet and informal educator's interview sessions.

It was the writer's belief that there were several causes for the stated problem. These 30 educators had not been given the training that is necessary to meet the needs of children in foster care placement because school districts have often failed to provide a framework in which elementary school educators may use to become aware of, understand, and fulfill some of the unmet needs of children who are in foster care placement; therefore, these educators lack the specialized training necessary to teach and to cope with children in foster care placement. These 30 educators have not been afforded the benefits that specialized training would have given them in regards to proper coping strategies needed to teach children in foster placement. It is assumed that elementary school educators could cope more effectively and acquire educational skills if they were also afforded supportive services.

These elementary educators expressed preconceived biases such as, "All foster children are dishonest and cannot help it because they inherit this from their parents; foster children cannot learn because they were prenatally

exposed to illegal drugs; all foster children have done something wrong or bad and that's why they are in foster placement."

Because educators have expressed these preconceived ideas, they stated that having these foster care children in their classroom is a waste of their time, and that these children should be referred to special education classes. These 30 educators were considered sheltered by the writer because until 1990 they were not exposed to the special problems that children in foster care bring to a small community school. In 1990, approximately 30,000 abused, neglected, and abandoned children were served by the Department of Children's Services (Kirk, 1990). These children who, in many instances, were suffering from the trauma of their previous situation (mental, emotional, social, and/or medical problems), were placed in schools where educators, who were unfamiliar with their personal histories, were expected to teach them by using the same strategies that they had used in the past for children not having these special needs.

The provision of education for foster care children is extremely difficult, frustrating, and time-consuming for the elementary school level professional. In addition, within the past two years the number of foster care children enrollment has more than tripled at the writer's setting. Until then, educators in this school setting were so isolated that they could not understand that there were

children with special needs that would come to their school. When this happened these educators were not ready. These educators were put in the position of teaching where they had no expertise.

Lee et al. (1990) reported that elementary school educators frequently ignore and/or minimize the problems of children in foster placement. These educators often isolated these children away from the regular classroom setting. These educators were not aware that the department of Human Services located in Washington, D.C., is responsible for providing supportive services for these educators, services such as references to psychotherapy and family therapy according to a child's needs. Therefore, these educators were made aware of the avenues that they could take to better themselves when it comes to the teaching of foster care children.

Youths in foster care have been identified as those who are at-risk of dropping out of school. National statistics have not kept records on the dropout rate of foster children as a group; however, other social indices underscore the educational needs of this group (Lee, 1987). Childrens' life outside of the classroom sometimes put them at-risk, but this practicum was concerned only with the childrens' classroom behavior as a risk factor affecting teacher judgment.

When educating children in foster care placement, educators are forced to deal with "multicultural issues,"

such as religion and family values. (Wilson, 1989).

To analyze the results of objective one, the writer used a worksheet to compare pre and post implementation information in regards to the educators' ability to cope and to teach children in foster care placement. This chart called, Teacher Appraisal Worksheet, indicated the educators years in education training and professional exposure to foster care children, and the ability that they felt that they had to cope and to teach children in foster care, the number of foster care children in their classroom and the number of these children referred for evaluation to be placed in a special education classroom. This worksheet showed a high number of referrals and suspensions which indicated that educators generally do not know what to do with these foster care children.

In objective two, 28 of the 30 educators assessed one foster child from their classroom to determine whether this child met the criteria for special education referral. (The other two educators were the school principal and the school psychologist who had no classroom children).

The intervention strategy checklist used showed that the 30 educators after a thorough examination and open discussion of each foster care child, agreed that 23 of the 28 children qualified for referral to be assessed for special education placement either for severe behavior problems, classroom coping skills or health related problems that cause children to be placed "at-risk".

Table 1a. Teacher Appraisal Worksheet Post In-service Training

Educators	Number of Foster Children in class	Referrals Before Implement-ation	Referrals After Implement-ation	Number of Foster Children minus
1	10	8	3	-5
2	7	7	2	-5
3	9	6	1	-5
4	5	5	1	-4
5	7	4	0	-4
6	10	8	2	-6
7	6	6	1	-5
8	5	4	0	-4
9	8	6	1	-5
10	7	5	1	-5
11	6	4	0	-4
12	9	7	0	-5
13	4	4	2	-3
14	3	3	1	-3
15	8	7	0	-7
16	6	5	0	-5
17	4	3	0	-3
18	3	1	0	-1
19	8	7	0	-5
20	6	2	2	-2
21	4	4	0	-4
22	7	6	0	-5
23	8	8	3	-5
24	8	5	0	-5
25	2	0	0	-0
26	9	7	1	-6
27	6	4	1	-3
28	7	5	1	-4

In objective three, educators were made aware of some of the special needs of the children in foster care. To show an increase in the understanding of these special needs, a 30 minute assessment was completed by each educator at the end of each training session. Implementation showed the improved attitude of each educator toward foster care children. The results of the evaluation instrument indicated a reduced level of referrals of foster care children in any two month period by five and the classroom teachers stated that they had developed greater confidence in teaching foster care children than before these in-service training sessions. Because of these results, the writer feels confident that all of the objectives have been met.

It was clear to the writer that in-service training was necessary. In order for these educators to teach children in foster care placement, they must receive training in the area of foster care children. The writer developed a program that would address specific issues in regards to the needs of the educators who are in charge of teaching foster care children, such as behavior, coping skill and health problems. Thirty two in-service training sessions were held.

Probably the most important lesson learned by these educators was that it was their responsibility to become aware of and to continually update their knowledge and skills with in-service classes, seminars and lectures by any

means that would keep them up-to-date on teaching strategies for all children.

Discussions

One benefit of this practicum was that it allowed all of the school educators to work together, share issues, feelings and plan as a unit. The writer has been on the team for three years and this was the second time that the team worked well without competition. It is worthy to note that not only did the team act as a unit, but it brought the entire school together as well,

An additional benefit was noted during implementation. The project gave the writer an opportunity to meet weekly with the staff to discuss and monitor the implementation progress. This intervention is highly recommended to handle any properly referred problem or problems as they occur.

During the course of this project, one unexpected event occurred. The writer had planned to present at a previously set date and time but was informed two days prior to that date that the in-service had to be rescheduled for a date later in the week and because of this, the educators had to be notified of this change. Even though there was a change in the schedule, 28 of the 30 educators attended the meeting.

The progress made by the implementation of the practicum was positive. The time allotted for each in-service training session was originally 45 to 60 minutes; however, the enthusiasm expressed by the educators made it

necessary to go beyond the previously allotted time span, and most presentations had to be extended by 30 to 40 minutes. During the in-service training sessions, the educators asked many questions. Therefore, much information was given by the writer, and the presentations were well received by the educators.

The writer always expected a positive response from the in-service training sessions because of the importance of the subject matter and the willingness of the subjects to participate in this learning experience. However, this awareness issue was not only a service to enlighten the educators, but it created an awareness of the special needs of the foster care child. Educators can be educated to meet the needs of all school age children, whether it is by proper age, appropriate learning, or by proper educational placement and/or referral.

Recommendations

The in-service training used in this practicum worked extremely well with the more experienced educator. The educators who had the most difficulty were those who had the least classroom experience and those who had the least exposure to the children in foster care placement. The writer recommends that visits to the classrooms of the more experienced educators should be arranged for new educators prior to in-service training. These visits would provide new educators with practical examples of teaching strategies and techniques being used. The more experienced educators,

acting as a mentor, would assist the new educators through the identification and referral process of children in foster care placement.

The second recommendation is that during the training of educators, part of the curriculum should include a two unit class on "the at-risk," child. By having this class, educators will be exposed to the necessary tools to teach "at-risk" children.

Dissemination

The results of this practicum have been shared with the administrators of local schools and with the writer's immediate colleagues. Because of the success of this practicum, it will be implemented by the writer at three other elementary schools.

During this in-service, the writer was contacted by a representative from the county, who, after sharing this practicum, requested services to teach county employees, who are in charge of placing foster children in metropolitan area schools. However, the writer is unable to accommodate the county representative's offer at this time, but will share the strategies used in this in-service training.

REFERENCES

Birch, D. and Elliott, M. (1987). Toward a new conception of teachers education in Hewin, L. and McCann, S. (Eds.) Contemporary Education Issues: The Canadian Mosaic. Toronto: Copp Clark Pittman Ltd.

Bondy, D. Davis, D. Hagen, S. Spiritos, A., and Winnick, A. (1990). Mental health services to children. Children Today, September-October.

Brophy, J. and Good, T. L. (1986). Teacher behavior and student achievement. In M.C. Whittrock (Ed.), Handbook of Research on Teaching, (3rd. ed.), 328-375.

Charles, G. and Matheson, J. (1991). Suicide prevention and intervention with young people in foster care in Canada. Child Welfare, 70 (2), 185-191.

Cole, C.K. and Johnson, D. J. (1992). Today's challenge: Teaching strategies for working with young children prenatally exposed to drugs/alcohol. School Safety, 7-9.

Crain, S.J. and Iwanicki, E. F. (1986). Perceived role conflict, role ambiguity, and burnout among special education teachers. Remedial and Special Education, 7 24-31.

Cuban, L. (1989). The at-risk label and the problem of urban school reform. Phi Delta Kappa, 70, 780-801.

Edmonds, R. (1983). Search for effective schools, Washington, DC: Horace Mann Learning Center. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service, No. ED 213689).

Frymier, J. and Gansneder, B. (1989). The Phi Delta Kappa study of students at-risk, Phi Delta Kappa, 71, 142-146.

Fujii, S. (1988, August). Interview With at-risk Counselor, Los Angeles Unified School District.

Fuller, M. (1982) The Meaning of Educational Change. Toronto: OISE Press/The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.

Gil, E. and Bogart, K. (1982). Foster children speak out: A study of children's perceptions of foster care. Children Today, 16(4), 7-9.

Hahn, A., and Danzberger, J. (1987). Dropouts in America: Enough is known for action. Washington, DC: Institute for Educational Leadership.

Hendricks, J. (1990). Total Learning, (3rd ed.), Columbus: Merrill.

Johnson, D. J. and Cole, C. K. (1992). Extraordinary care for extraordinary children. School Safety, 50,(5) 7-9.

Kauffman, J. M., Lloyd, J. W., Landrum, T. J. and Wong, K. L. H. (1988). Development of a scale for measuring teachers belief about student's behavior (3rd ed.), New York: Macmillan.

Kaumaya, S. (1990, Spring). New kids on the block. Childhood Education, 150-152.

Kirk, T. (1990). A Foster Child in Your Classroom. The Department of Children Services, Los Angeles County.

LAUSD, (1991). The Teachers Beliefs Scale (TBS). Unpublished manuscript university of Virginia.

Lay-Dopyera, and Dopyera, J. (1987). Becoming a Teaching of Young Children, (3rd ed.), New York: Randon House.

Lee, S., Bryant, S., Noonan, N. and Plionis, E. (1987). Keeping youth in school: public private collaboration. Child Today, 19(4), 15-20.

Lee, S. Luppino, J. and Plionis, E. (1990). Keeping youth in school: A follow up report. Children Today, 19(4)., 4-7.

Lee, Sylvia (1987). Keeping youth in school: A public printer collaboration, Children Today, July-August 1987.

Levine, D. and Havinghurst, R. (1989). Society and Education (7th ed.) Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Lloyd, J. W., Kauffman, J. M. Landrum, T.J. and Rose, D.L. (1993). Why do teachers refer pupils for special education? An analysis of referral records. Exceptionality.

Marte, J. (1990, Spring). New kids on the block. Childhood Education, p. 147.

Monaco, F. A. (1987). Here's the data: At-risk OVT programs, Pittsburgh, PA: Pittsburgh Public Schools.

Morgan, E. P. (1989). Effective teaching in the urban high school. Urban Education, 14, 161-181.

Murray, M. (1990, Spring). New Kids on the Block. Childhood Education, 149.

Nowacek, E. J., McKinney, J. D. and Hallaban, D. P. (1990). Instructional behavior of more and less effective beginning regular and special educators. Exceptional Children, 57, 140-149.

Poulsen, M. K. (1985). Strategies for healthy preschool and school age development. Hospital Safety, 16(3), 7-10.

Poulsen, M. K., (1986). Risk factors in drug exposed preschool and school aged children. Hospital Safety, 16,(4), 7-9.

Rogoss, B., and Morelli, G. (1989). Perspectives on children's development from cultural psychology. American Psychology, 44, 343-348.

Self, J., Benning, A., Marston, D., Magnson D. (1991). Cooperative teaching project: A model for student at-risk. Exceptional Children, 26-34.

Shinn, M. R., Ramsey, E., Walker, H. M. Streber., S., and O'Neill, R. E. (1987). Antisocial behavior in school settings: Initial differences in an at-risk and normal population. The Journal of Special Education, 21(2), 69-84.

Sizemore, B. (1985). Pitfalls and promises of effective schools research. Journal of Negro Education, 54, 269-288.

Speece, D. L., and Cooper, D. H. (1990). Ontogeny of school failure: Classification of first-grade children. American Research Journal, 27, 119-140.

Spencer, M. B. and Markstrom-Adams, C. (1990). (Identity process among racial and ethnic minority children in America. Children Development, 61, 290-310.

Stufft, D. (1989, March). In Limbo: Foster care children, Principal, 34-35, 38.

Wilson, M. N. (1989). Child development in the context of the black extended family. American Psychologist, 4,380-385.

APPENDIX A

STRATEGIES FOR HEALTHY PRESCHOOL AND SCHOOL AGE DEVELOPMENT

POULSEN (1985)

STRATEGIES FOR HEALTHY PRESCHOOL AND

SCHOOL AGE DEVELOPMENT POULSEN (1985)

A. Flexible Room Environment

Foster care students need a setting in which classroom materials and equipment can be removed, to reduce stimuli, or added, to enrich the activity.

B. Transition Time Plans

Foster care students need a setting in which transition time is seen as an activity in and of itself and as such has a beginning, middle and end. Special preparation is given to transition time, recognizing that it is one of the best times of the day to teach the child how to prepare for and cope with change and ambivalence.

C. Adult: Student Ratio

Foster care students need a setting in which adult-child ratio is high enough to promote attachment.

D. Attachment

Foster care students need a teacher who accepts the child with a history of both positive and negative experiences. It is assumed that as a high risk child there may be a history of poor attachments and lack of trust. The degree to which a child comes to trust the world depends, to a great extent upon the quality of care received. When care is inconsistent, inadequate or rejecting, it fosters mistrust.

E. Role Model

Foster care children at risk need educators who understands that by establishing an individual, trusting relationship, the educator becomes an important person, and the behavior that the educator models is more likely to be imitated.

F. Peer Sensitivity

Children at risk need educators who realize that children become sensitive and aware of the needs and feelings of others by repeatedly having their own needs met.

G. Decision Making

Children who are at risk need an educator who recognizes that it is important that they be allowed to make decisions for themselves. Freedom to choose and to assume the responsibility for those choices gradually expands the views of the child's physical, social, emotional and intellectual growth.

H. Home

The home is recognized as an essential part of the curriculum. Facilitating parental/caregiver goals helps to establish a close working relationship between home and school. Intervention strategies that strengthen the positive interaction between child and family increase parental confidence and competency.

I. Program

Program intervention is best achieved when all professionals concerned with the child and family are coordinated. To accomplish this intervention successfully, time must be allotted for educators to meet and plan with assistants and for support services of social workers, psychologists, speech and language and adaptive physical education to come together in a trans-disciplinary model.

APPENDIX A

(K-6th grade)

ACTIVITY I

Closing Activities: Circle of Friends

Directions: Have children stand in a circle. Go around the circle and have each child give a 1-3 word answer for the following statements. Children should have the right to "pass." Educators will find it very helpful to include themselves in the circle and to complete the statement. The educators' comment can service as a model for the children.

Do these activities at the end of the day, one time a week. Do not do on the day you conduct a warm-up activity.

Time: 5-10 minutes for each. Do only one at a time.

Day 1: One thing I like in a friend is _____

This statement will provide peer model information for making friends.

Day 2: One thing I did for another class member was _____

Day 3: One thing someone in my class did for me was _____

Day 4: I like it when others _____

Day 5: I do not like it when others _____

Day 6: My best friend is _____

because _____

Day 7: Two things I like to do with a friend are _____

_____

and _____

Day 8: I think I'd make a good friend because _____

_____

Day 9: One way a classmate can become my friend is by _____

Day 10: Our class can become friendlier to one another by _____

APPENDIX A

(K-4th grade)

Like Ourselves - Circle of Friends

Directions: Pair children that know one another somewhat. Have them interview one another using the following questions.

Time: 20-30 minutes

1. Name one thing you think is neat about yourself. Why?
2. Name one thing you like about me? Why?
3. Describe yourself to me. Use both physical and feeling words.

   Examples are: tall, happy, fun.
4. Tell one thing that a grown-up has done to make you happy.
5. Tell one thing a grown-up has done to make you unhappy or upset.
6. How do you feel when someone gives you a compliment?
7. How do you like for others to show you that they like you?

   Hug you_____ Tell you_____ Smile at you_____

   Listen to you_____ Give you a pat on the back_____
8. What are your feeling at this moment?
9. Tell one thing that happened to you today or yesterday at school.
10. Name three nouns that tell about you:

    Example: 1.a girl 2.a friend 3.a writer
11. We both like ourselves because:

    1._____

    2._____

    3._____

APPENDIX B

HOW TEACHERS CAN HELP CHILDREN COPE WITH STRESS

HOW TEACHERS CAN HELP CHILDREN COPE WITH STRESS

1. Fundamental to helping foster care children cope with stress is the development of well-toned adult noticing skills. Recognize when a child is stressed. Be alert to changes in behavior (more quarrels with playmates, bed-wetting, poor concentration) that signals stress. Parents and teachers who are sensitive to telltale signs of stress can tune in more effectively. Learn the signs of stress.

2. Demonstrate self-control and coping skills yourself. Be fair and sensitive to differences and problems. Demonstrate brave behaviors. Keep calm even when classroom problems arise and stresses (such as crying, diarrhea, acting-out) seem to be especially prevalent or aggravating on a particular day. If a teacher's voice is exasperated, whiny, disappointed, aggrieved, or angry fairly often, the young children learn that these are acceptable models of coping with stress.

3. As a parent or teacher, find social supports in your own life so that you are energized for adaptive coping with problems that arise with young children. Your "feeling of confidence or faith that things will work out as well as can be reasonably expected and that the odds can be surmounted" contributes to children's effective coping.

4. Enhance foster care children's self-esteem wherever and whenever possible through encouragement, caring, focused attention, and warm personal worth of each child.

5. Encourage each child to develop a special interest or skill that can serve as an inner source of pride and self-esteem.

6. Use proactive intervention to avoid unnecessary stress. Give children plenty of time before a transition. For example, use verbal, musical, or light-dimming signals so children can gradually put away toys and get ready for lunch. Anticipates stressful occasions. Preventive actions lessen the possibility and impact of stressful events. Frequent fire drills make children less terrified of loud alarms or sudden commotions. Children who have experienced fire drill become used to their occurrence and the rules to be followed, so that a fire drill does not become an occasion for panic.

APPENDIX B

7. Help foster care children understand the consequences and implications of negative, acting-out behaviors on others and on themselves.

8. Acknowledge foster care childrens' feelings and encourage verbal mediation. Help children learn that they are not alone in having uncomfortable feelings. Given them permission to feel scared, lonely, or angry (as when a peer squashes their sandpie). Help them decenter-become able to see how others also feel upset if they play or rights are interfered with. Give children words to express their negative feelings so that they will not have to be aggressive or disorganized when stressed. "I" statements help a child communicate personal upset and strong wishes rather than accusing, hurting, or threatening others.

9. Help foster care children distinguish reality from fantasy.

10. Use gently humor when possible to help children reframe their negative thoughts and feelings.

11. If the stressor on a child is peer aggression, focus directly on the stressor. If a class bully gets others to tease or jeer at a child, you must stop the bullying.

12. Help foster care children view their situation more positively. Some stressors make a child feel ashamed as well as hurt. Shame eats at a childs' self-esteem.

13. Structure classroom activities to enhance cooperation rather than competition.

14. If a foster care child is unpopular with peers, arrange for cooperative activities that require children to work together.

15. Modify classroom situations and rules. Make choices and expectations easier to understand and to meet. Rearrange environments to decrease stress. Quiet reading concerns should not be set up adjacent to tricycle riding or block building areas.

16. Find individual talk time with troubled children. Find out how the foster care child perceive threats or stresses. A foster care child may feel picked on or that nobody likes her or him.

17. Mobilize other children to help. For example, if a foster care child is entering a preschool class, talk with the children about strengths and troubles every child, and particularly the foster care child might have in making friends.

18. Have regular classroom talks, in a safe calm atmosphere, about different stressors.

19. Provide verbal stems for foster care children who may find it difficult to talk in circle time: "One time when I really felt scared, I..."My friend made me feel really good when..." One time I was very worried when..."
Such openers help educators evaluate the appraisal reactions of young foster care children to stressors and to learn the range and efficacy of coping strategies that children have used.

20. Use art. Many young children cannot verbally express fears and anger about the painful stressors in their lives. Paint, clay and other art tools allow these children to express upset and act out private feelings.